

In February, 1983, the Newark Economic Development Corporation officially launched its fourth Neighborhood Commercial Corridor initiative, which is known as the "FACADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM". This comprehensive program is to revitalize three of Newark's most prominent commercial areas. The Program will provide a grant, not to exceed \$3,000 per business, for eligible applicants. The grant will be awarded on a reimbursement basis subsequent to the applicant's completing 100% of the proposed improvements. Such improvements include the installation of new lighting and signage; storefront improvements i.e., aluminum siding, brickfacing, and exterior painting, replacement of windows, and landscaping. The three commercial areas include Bergen Street, Springfield Avenue and Sixteenth Avenue.

The program is designed to provide an incentive for merchants and small businesses to engage in exterior rehabilitation activities. It is envisioned that these activities will have a visual impact in improving the physical characteristics of the commercial strips. Program participants will be encouraged to employ a design scheme which will focus on common facade treatments, uniform signage and the installation of new exterior lighting.

This program was precipitated by a market feasibility study commissioned in 1981 by the City's Office of Planning and Grantsmanship. The study was conducted by Candeub, Fleissig and Associates, a Newark-based planning and development consultant firm. One of the recommendations concluded in the study indicated that improvements of the physical characteristics will increase commercial activity along these corridors. Such activity will create opportunities for businessmen and other entrepreneurs to purchase and rehabilitate abandoned buildings and vacant lots. The City viewed this recommendation as a top priority, and consequently \$200,000 was allocated from its eighth year Community Development Block Grant Funds for the implementation of the program.

Mayor Gibson said: "In order for Newark neighborhoods to continue their

stride toward rejuvenation, it is absolutely necessary to address the problems along our inner city commercial corridors. I strongly believe that the Facade Improvement Program will enable merchants and small businesses to improve their delivery of goods and services to community residents. In addition, the program will provide a financial incentive for businesses to undertake improvements that have been deferred."

Since this program will be implemented on three separate corridors, each possessing their own unique identity, varying types of businesses, and different physical characteristics, the architectural plans/renderings will be designed specifically to enhance these special qualities. Through the utilization of some sophisticated urban design techniques, it is anticipated that the program will have a positive impact on the corridors.

According to Alfred Failla, Executive Director of the Newark Economic Development Corporation, "Newark's commercial corridors have experienced tremendous amounts of property abandonment while other property owners have been practicing disinvestment. I envision the Facade Program serving as a catalyst for encouraging financial investments and creating opportunities for entrepreneurs. These commercial corridors (because of their location, transportation accessibility and mixture of goods and services) offer great potential for development."

Although each business located on these corridors is eligible to participate in the program, special emphasis will be placed on the commercial areas that generate the highest concentration of commercial activity. They are: Bergen Street, from Lyons to Custer Avenues; Springfield Avenue, from High Street to South Orange Avenue, from Beacon Street to Hayes Street, from Hunterdon Street to Fairmount Avenue, from South 6th Street to South 11th Street, and from South 16th Street to South 19th Streets; and 16th Avenue, from South 11th Street to South 14th Street, and from South 17th Street to the City line. Based on the applications that have been submitted, the majority of the businesses requesting to participate in the program are located within these areas.

In order to qualify for a grant, each merchant/business must: (1) complete and submit an application which is available at the Office of Planning and Grantsmanship; (2) provide three separate cost estimates from a certified contractor for the participated improvements; (3) provide a copy of the deed (if the owner) or obtain a minimum of a three-year lease (if the tenant); and (4) verify that the property is current in its real estate taxes, and water and sewer charges. Upon completion and verification of these items, the merchant will enter into a three-party contractual agreement. The Parties of the Agreement are Newark Economic Development Corporation, the Merchant Association and the prospective merchant.

The other three commercial programs took place on the following corridors:

1. South Orange Avenue - The Merchant Association received over \$100,000 to undertake public improvements i.e., the installation of new sidewalks, tree plantings, and the development of a surface parking lot for patrons. Prior to undertaking these improvements, the Newark Economic Development Corporation commissioned a market-feasibility study. The study recommended that the above improvements were necessary in order to stabilize the commercial district and to increase commercial activity.

2. Central Avenue - The Community Business Owners Association, a merchant association operating along this commercial corridor, was awarded in 1981 \$50,000 to undertake capital improvements. These improvements include both interior and exterior renovations. The program operated on Central Avenue, between South 6th and 12th Streets. Approximately 25 businesses were identified in the targeted area, and over 15 participated in the grant program. Each merchant was entitled to receive a grant not to exceed \$3,000 on a reimbursement basis.

3. Orange Street and Roseville Avenue - The Roseville-Orange Merchant Association was awarded in 1981 \$50,000 for the undertaking of a capital improvement program. The program is operating on Orange Street, between 3rd and Bathgate Streets, and Roseville Avenue, between Orange Street and 7th Avenue. There were approximately

54 businesses identified in the targeted area, of which 23 are participating in the program. The remaining 31 merchants will participate in the second round of funding that was awarded in 1982.

NEDC assisted each merchant association in developing a program that was specifically related to community needs and business interest. Through the cooperation and joint-working relationship with the merchant associations, these programs have been highly successful.

The City of Newark, through the NEDC, will continue addressing the problems of the neighborhood commercial corridors. The three commercial areas slated for future improvements are Central Avenue, Broadway and Ferry Street. The allocation of funds to implement improvements along these corridors are presently in the budget process.